

4/18/2008

THE ELDER JUSTICE COALITION

**THE ELDER
JUSTICE
COALITION:
A NATIONAL
ADVOCACY
VOICE FOR
ELDER
JUSTICE IN
AMERICA**

**JOHN B.
BREAUX:
HONORARY
CHAIR**

**ROBERT B.
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NATIONAL
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EJC Members:

Yesterday, April 17th, 2008, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security of the House Judiciary Committee held a hearing on H.R. 1783, the Elder Justice Act. The Honorable Rahm Emmanuel, the author of the Elder Justice Act, testified, along with Bob Blancato, the National Coordinator of the Elder Justice Coalition. The Honorable Joe Sestak testified on his Elder Abuse bill, H.R. 5352, the Elder Abuse Victims Act, as well.

For copies of the hearing materials and to view the webcast, visit <http://judiciary.house.gov/hearings.aspx?ID=200> [Note: The hearing also covered H.R. 5352, the Elder Abuse Victims Act of 2008, a targeted version of the Elder Justice Act; H.R. 2352, the School Safety Enhancements Act of 2007; and H.R. 5464, A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center Act]

Make no mistake about it; this was both an historic hearing for the U.S. House and a critical milestone in our Coalition's work toward passage of the Elder Justice Act. As Bob mentioned in his testimony, the first hearing on the topic of elder abuse took place more than 30 years ago on the House Special Committee on Aging, and it has been 17 years since the last hearing in the House. The Judiciary Committee members were unanimous in their view that it is past the time to act and that the bipartisan nature of this legislation makes it opportune for action in the near future. You may recall that the Senate has acted in the past with little attention paid to the bill by the House until it was too late in the sessions.

Further, with Representative Rahm Emanuel testifying and serving as a member of the House leadership, and with the full Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, Jr. participating in the hearing, we have good reason to believe that action on the bill may be forthcoming. In addition to the bipartisan statements of support for the bill during the hearing, it appeared that the Chairman of the Subcommittee, Representative Robert C. "Bobby" Scott and its Ranking Member Representative, Louie Gohmert were willing to work with Representative Emanuel and Representative Sestak to iron out any concerns that the minority might have.

Suffice it to say, EJC staff are optimistic and hopeful that the House Judiciary Committee will mark-up their sections of the bill in the

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near future and the Senate Finance Committee will move forward quickly as well. Scroll down for an article on the hearing.

In addition to the hearing, the advocacy continues in Washington. H.R. 1783 currently has a total of 105 Co-Sponsors.

New Co-Sponsors to H.R. 1783 include:

[Rep Lee, Barbara](#) [CA-9] - 4/8/2008

[Rep Davis, Artur](#) [AL-7] - 4/14/2008

[Rep Honda, Michael M.](#) [CA-15] - 4/17/2008

For a complete list of co-sponsors, visit [House Co-Sponsors](#)

S. 1070, the Senate version of the Elder Justice Act, now has 26 Co-Sponsors, including the following new co-sponsors:

[Sen Durbin, Richard](#) [IL] - 4/16/2008

[Sen Bingaman, Jeff](#) [NM] - 4/16/2008

For a complete list of co-sponsors, visit [Senate Co-Sponsors](#)

We encourage EJC members to continue to make contact with their representatives. Basic talking points and tools can be found on the EJC website, supplemented with the information contained in this bulletin.

Newport News Daily Press: Scott pushing anti-crime bills

By DAVID LERMAN

Virginia Rep. Robert C. Scott is helping shepherd four bills through the House that are aimed at reducing crime and preventing abuse. Scott, chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on crime, held a hearing Thursday on bills that would authorize money and programs to beef up security at public schools, help track down missing children, and help authorities identify and prevent abuse of senior citizens.

"I believe all of these measures before us today will make significant improvements to public safety, particularly to children and senior citizens," said Scott, a Newport News Democrat.

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None of the measures triggered any vocal opposition, but funding would hinge on separate appropriations bills. The most complex of the bills reviewed Thursday was a measure by Rep. Rahm Emanuel, D-Ill., that would provide new federal resources to combat elder abuse.

The Elder Justice Act, which would cost more than \$200 million a year, would offer grants to local law enforcement agencies, create new forensic centers to detect abuse, and provide better coordination among all relevant federal, state, local and private agencies that care for seniors. Emanuel said 500,000 to 5 million senior citizens become victims of some form of abuse every year. And the problem will likely get worse, he said, as 77 million Baby Boomers prepare to retire.

Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, the subcommittee's ranking Republican, said he was concerned the bill may give too much authority to the Department of Justice for abuse cases that are best handled at the local level. Emanuel said the bill is designed to assist state and local authorities and would not set new national laws.

Another bill, by Rep. Steven Rothman, D-N.J., would increase the funding authorized to help local school districts pay for security upgrades such as metal detectors. The bill would reduce the amount of local matching funds required to participate in the program, which currently serves only 2,400 of the nation's 95,615 public schools.

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